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DOH-CITRUS REMINDS RESIDENTS TO AVOID CONTACT WITH WILDLIFE

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Holidays are a time for gatherings, but make sure you're not inviting wild or stray animals into your home or yard. Instead, stay clear of all wildlife to protect yourself and your loved ones from rabies.

Rabies, a preventable viral disease, is transmitted through exposure to the saliva and nervous tissue from a rabid animal.



People usually get rabies from the bite of a rabid animal, however, it is also possible for people to get rabies from scratches, abrasions or open wounds that are exposed to saliva or other potentially infectious material from a rabid animal.

The main wildlife sources of rabies in Florida are raccoons and bats. Infected raccoons and bats can expose people, pets, livestock and other wildlife to rabies.

Each year, more than 59,000 people die from rabies around the world. The good news is rabies in people is 100 percent preventable through quick response and medical care. The postexposure treatment involves a series of injections to stop the disease before symptoms develop.

The Florida Department of Health in Citrus County (DOH-Citrus) urges residents to follow these guidelines to prevent rabies exposure:

- Never adopt wild animals or bring them into your home. Do not try to nurse injured animals to health. To report injured wildlife, contact a local [wildlife rehabilitator](#) or call the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission's (FWC) Wildlife Alert Hotline at 888-404-3922.
- Never touch strays or wildlife, such as raccoons that appear to be sick. Instead, call Citrus County Sheriff's Office (CCSO) Animal Control Unit at 352-726-1121. If you are experiencing other conflicts with wildlife, visit the [FWC Species Profile](#) or call 386-758-0525 for additional assistance and information.
- Do not leave food outdoors for pets or wildlife.
- Have your veterinarian vaccinate pets and at-risk livestock, make sure you follow your veterinarian's instructions for revaccination.
- Keep your pets under direct supervision in case they encounter strays or wild animals. Follow leash laws by keeping pets and livestock secured on your property.
- If a stray, wild or unvaccinated animal bites or scratches your pet, do not examine your pet for injuries without wearing gloves. Wash your pet with soap and water to remove

saliva from the attacking animal and do not let your animal come into contact with other animals or people until the situation is handled. Seek veterinary assistance for your pet and immediately report it to CCSO Animal Control Unit.

- If you believe you may have been exposed to rabies, go to a hospital or medical treatment area or call 911. Next, call DOH-Citrus at 352-527-0068 or CCSO Animal Control Unit and tell them everything you know about the victim and the animal. Never hesitate to seek medical attention when dealing with a possible rabies exposure.

For more information about rabies, visit floridahealth.gov/diseases-and-conditions/rabies.

For more information about DOH-Citrus, visit www.CitrusCountyHealth.org or follow us on Twitter at [@FLHealthCitrus](https://twitter.com/FLHealthCitrus).

About the Florida Department of Health

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